

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The objection to claim 15 has been overcome by deleting the unnecessary period.

The claims have been amended, where appropriate, to clarify the patentable distinctions between the inventions claimed and the prior art, including Braun (U.S. Patent 6,623,226), Shely (U.S. Patent 4,640,479), and Webb (U.S. Patent 1,800,578).

Independent claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, a cylindrical sleeve having substantially identical opposite ends and constructed to be inserted longitudinally into a bore with either end leading, and to be held therein by engagement of its outer surface with an inner surface of the bore; and an annular bead extending circumferentially and inwardly from a location on the inner surface of the sleeve centrally between the opposite ends of the sleeve. Clearly, no such sleeve and annular bead are disclosed in Braun.

An important aspect of the invention is the bi-directional nature of the sleeve and the bead, so that there need be no concern as to which end of the sleeve is inserted into a bore first. Devices such as the invention

are frequently used in the automobile industry, for example, in thousands. For a typical specific application of the invention, see, e.g., page 2, lines 11-19, of the present specification. The bi-directionality of the invention is important to the practicality of the invention and is neither taught nor suggested by Braun.

The same remarks apply to Shely and to Webb. Neither reference teaches or suggests a grommet that is bi-directional. Moreover, the grommets of the references are held in place by slots that engage thin metal walls, and the grommet of Shely is split and is used with a cable tie that pulls the split grommet together. Neither grommet is capable of performing in the manner of Applicant's invention. Furthermore, element 24 of Webb does not extend inwardly from a central location on the inner surface of the sleeve. Element 24 is at the end of a conical sleeve 22 fixed at one end of a tubular body portion 18.

Accordingly, Claim 1 and the claims dependent thereon clearly distinguish patentably from the prior art and should be allowed. Dependent claim 4 has been amended to clarify that the bead is connected to the inner surface of the sleeve by a web thinner than the bead longitudinally of

the sleeve. See Fig. 5, for example, of Applicant's drawings.

From the foregoing discussion of independent Claim 1 and the references, it will be apparent that amended independent Claims 7, 11, and 15 also distinguish patentably from the prior art. Accordingly, these claims and the claims dependent thereon should be allowed. Dependent Claim 18 has been amended in the same manner as Claim 4. Similar Claims 21 and 22 have been added and are dependent on Claims 7 and 11, respectively. New Claims 23-25 have been added to recite the hinged nature of the connection of the bead to the sleeve.

A check for \$90.00 is attached in payment of the required fee for excess claims.

This application is now believed to be clearly in condition for allowance.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 which may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this

paper and has not been requested separately, then such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

NHS:kss

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